



Safe Dates

PROVEN RESULTS*

- 56% to 92% reduction in reports of physical, serious physical, and sexual dating violence victimization and perpetration at 4-year followup



Safe Dates is a school-based program designed to stop or prevent the initiation of psychological, physical, and sexual abuse on dates or between individuals involved in a dating relationship. Intended for male and female middle- and high-school students 12 to 18 years of age, the Safe Dates program can stand alone or easily fit within a health education, family, or general life skills curriculum. Because violent behavior is often tied to substance abuse, Safe Dates may be used with drug and alcohol prevention and general violence prevention programs.

The Safe Dates program includes a curriculum with nine 50-minute sessions, a 45-minute play to be performed by students, and a poster contest. Program goals are to—

- Change adolescent dating violence norms
- Change adolescent gender-role norms
- Improve conflict resolution skills for dating relationships
- Promote victim and perpetrator beliefs in need for help and awareness of community resources for dating violence
- Promote help-seeking by victims and perpetrators
- Improve peer help-giving skills

INTENDED POPULATION

Safe Dates is designed for middle- and high-school students 12 to 18 years of age. NREPP* reviewed evaluations conducted in 14 primarily rural middle and high schools in North Carolina. The program has demonstrated effectiveness with African American and White youth, and was found to be equally effective for males and females.

The program can also be used in support groups, counseling programs, after-school programs, or faith-based or community enrichment (e.g., YMCA, Girl Scouts) youth programs. Safe Dates also may be used at domestic violence crisis centers, at juvenile diversion programs, and with victim support groups.

HOW IT WORKS

The Safe Dates intervention has five components: a nine-session curriculum, a play script, a poster contest, parent materials, and a teacher-training outline. The curriculum is delivered in nine 50-minute sessions and includes interactive exercises such as games, small- and large-group discussions, role-playing, and writing exercises. In schools, teachers and counselors can deliver Safe Dates, and some schools have trained student peer leaders to assist with program delivery.



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Outcomes

Analyses that tested the effects of the program 1 month (Wave 2), 1 year (Wave 2), 2 years (Wave 3), and 3 years (Wave 4) post-intervention indicate that adolescents who were exposed to Safe Dates in the eighth or ninth grade, as compared to those who were not, reported less psychological ($p = .0005$), moderate physical ($p = .02$), and sexual dating violence perpetration ($p = .04$); and less moderate physical dating violence victimization ($p = .01$) at all four followup periods.

Additionally, there was a marginal program effect ($p = .07$) on sexual dating violence victimization at all four followup periods. Also, in comparison to control adolescents, adolescents exposed to Safe Dates, and who reported at baseline no ($p = .001$) or average ($p = .005$) prior involvement in severe physical perpetration, reported less severe physical perpetration at all four followup periods.

Safe Dates had both primary and secondary prevention effects on all six of these outcomes, and the program was equally effective for males and females and for Whites and non-Whites. Program effects were mediated primarily by changes in dating violence norms, gender-role norms, and awareness of community services.

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The nine session topics include:

Session 1: Defining Caring Relationships

Session 2: Defining Dating Abuse

Session 3: Why Do People Abuse?

Session 4: How To Help Friends

Session 5: Helping Friends

Session 6: Overcoming Gender Stereotypes

Session 7: Equal Power Through Communication

Session 8: How We Feel, How We Deal

Session 9: Preventing Sexual Assault

Safe Dates includes a 45-minute play about dating abuse and violence entitled "There's No Excuse For Dating Abuse." The play uses student actors who can lead postplay small-group discussions using local statistics on teen dating abuse and other issues presented in the play. Safe Dates involves family members through its parent letter and parent brochure.

IMPLEMENTATION ESSENTIALS

The Safe Dates curriculum is best delivered in nine daily or weekly sessions, with a poster contest at the end of Session 9. All program materials, including reproducible student handouts, are included in the Safe Dates program implementation binder. Suggestions for a six- or four-session curriculum are provided, but program fidelity is best maintained by completing the nine-session curriculum, the play, and the poster contest. Training is not required, but highly recommended.

PROGRAM DEVELOPERS

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* National Registry of Effective Programs and Practices

*Program detail and citations can be obtained at
<http://modelprograms.samhsa.gov>*

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